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## EVERYONE WILL KNOW

In 2005, Doctors Ben and Taryn Gaunt answered God's call to come to Zithulele Hospital. Incidentally, it was also their dream – clearly a dream laid on their hearts, as without a strong call and a deeply held dream, it is unlikely that they would have stayed for the 17 years that they did. Joined by Doctors Karl and Sally Le Roux in 2006, this “sticky core” of four ordinary, yet extraordinary, four friends showed a community, hundreds of visiting students, the ‘powers that be’, and many other on-lookers, that with hard work and humanity, with patient care at the heart of everything that is done, that real differences can be made under often difficult circumstances.

In 2007, this ‘sticky core’ founded the Jabulani Rural Health Foundation, in order to take what they were doing in the hospital, out into the community, where much of what they were seeing in the hospital was already starting. The interconnectedness of health, education, poverty and the environment could not be ignored and it was essential to have avenues to address this beyond hospital passages and wards. From one community garden with one employee (who is still with us today!) to what we are now, Jabulani has surpassed initial plans and is definitely still working out the embodiment of the dream.

When Ben and Taryn arrived in Zithulele, their first child was one year old. He left at the start of this year to study medicine at University. The Gaunts thought



they would be seeing off each of their children from here as they each, in turn, completed their schooling (having been homeschooled by Taryn who split her time between being both teacher and doctor). The intention was that this would be their “forever home”. Unfortunately, when faced with baseless accusations of wrongdoing from those for whom politics seems to be more important than the “care” part of healthcare (perhaps you’ve been following Zithulele in the news this year?), and persecution prevents you from being able to continue doing your job to the best of your ability, sometimes the wisest thing for ‘the greater good’ is to remove yourself from the situation.



While the decision was exceedingly difficult to make, the Gaunt family left Zithulele at the end of September to begin the journey towards healing, and start the next chapter of their lives. However, their connection to Zithulele remains strong and is likely to always stay so. They remain on the Jabulani Board, through which they will be able to continue having a tremendous impact on this community, where we know they have left part of their hearts, and Ben is also on the Board of the Zithulele Independent School, that is transforming the lives of many young learners.

After the impact that they have had on thousands and thousands of patients and many, many others through their involvement in Jabulani and just through the lives that they've lived here, it is almost impossible to encapsulate the feelings of a community that has been heartbroken to see them go, but here are a few very moving quotes from the various speakers at their farewell that was attended by hospital colleagues, members of the community, members of the church that originally founded Zithulele Hospital, NGO partners...all of whom would consider themselves friends.

You have been communion to this community and you have brought communion to this community. The word community alone, does not quite sum it up.

We thank God that we had the privilege to share in your lives

You bled for Zithulele lives. You sweat for Zithulele lives. Goodbye Zithulele pillars. Goodbye our doors of steel. Goodbye our umbrella on a rainy day. Goodbye our angels.

Ben was someone who wanted to be on the same level, as opposed to a boss. He is always understanding and a good listener. He has patience. Since 2012, we have never had a fight. He goes the extra mile for his patients. He often gave money from his own pocket. He is a good person.



Above is each member of the Gaunt family, receiving traditional beads of the Bomvana tribe from members of the Uniting Reformed Church (the church started by the original missionaries who established Zithulele Hospital) so that **"no matter where they are, everyone will know where they have come from"**. From left to right: Taryn, Ben, Grace, Elijah, Abenathi, and Karl Le Roux receiving Josh's on his behalf, as Josh partakes in the event over video call from Cape Town

## IMPROVING MOBILITY THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

In 2019, Jabulani's Community Disability Workers (CDW) from the Rural Ability Programme completed a certified computer course run by Zithulele NGO Sihamba Sonke. The intention behind doing the course was to develop their capacity to work with technology and to improve their administration skills, as well as for their own professional development. However, in reality they were never able to use their newfound skills for the admin component of their work (logistics, connectivity, equipment, lack of security, among other reasons).

Meanwhile, Jabulani partnered with Cape Town based League of the Friends of the Blind (LOFOB), who were interested in trialling an NQF Level 5 qualification on Orientation and Mobility. Our CDWs, along with a group of students from Johannesburg, are the first cohort to be undertaking a qualification of this nature in South Africa. The course started in early 2020 and although it was due to be concluded within two years, the tragic Covid-19 death of the course developer and



facilitator knocked everything off schedule.

Earlier this year, when our Rural Ability Programme Manager was doing a review with LOFOB, they mentioned the struggles they were having with the fact that the CDWs work was handwritten and therefore when they received photos of it, the LOFOB staff then



had to spend time typing up the assignments before submission to the adjudicating authority.

As Sihamba Sonke's computer lab is available to those who have done their courses and need to use a computer, we spoke with them and arranged for the CDWs to use their lab with assistance from their team if needed. Once a month, when coming to Zithulele for meetings with us, the CDWs use the computer lab and complete the LOFOB assignments, rather than writing them by hand or via voice note. The staff at LOFOB

have really appreciated this change as it has made their workload much easier, and the CDWs are getting to use the IT skills that had remained theoretical since gaining their qualification in 2019.

Sometimes it takes a while to see what's right in front of us (figuratively and literally – the computer lab is right in front of the Jabulani office!), especially when you've put up with the inadequate way of doing things for so long, it become an unquestionable norm.

## CONSTRUCTING NEW LIFE FROM DESOLATION

There is no other way to say it...this year has been hard. During everything that went on in the hospital, the negative spotlight turned to Jabulani as well and baseless allegations of criminal activity to do with the resale of Eskom tokens and the money paid to Jabulani for the maintenance of houses and garden areas for accommodation that was built on hospital land were thrown in our direction. Unfortunately, among the general population and despite our efforts to impact this over the years, there is a complete lack of understanding of what it means to be a non profit organisation (NPO) and how the management of NPOs differ from commercial organisations. Despite not a single shred of evidence ever making an appearance at any meeting where these issues were raised and despite Jabulani providing evidence to the contrary, without proper procedure and with only 24 hours notice, Jabulani was unfortunately suspended from Zithulele Hospital. Overnight, we had 18 employees who either needed new roles or would need to be retrenched, something that has always been our last resort.

While all the hospital staff went on an enforced holiday of two weeks, we gathered our thoughts, got our emotions under control and worked out a short term plan of action. The team completing the Livelihoods Access Centre, and in particular the Coffee Shop part of it, went into turbo charge despite their exhaustion after being at it for so long, as we knew that redeploying staff into the Livelihoods programme that we were on the verge of expanding, was going to be one of our easiest ways to keep staff employed.

We took the opportunity to meet with every member of the hospital team, to explore what opportunities were potentially available to them, discuss their career goals and aspirations and where Jabulani fit into their future. For a few individuals, the opportunities available within Jabulani were just not what they were interested in - it was too big a change from the work that they had been doing in healthcare, and so they opted to take voluntary retrenchment and invest their severance pay in furthering their career elsewhere. For others, we started trying to match them up to the roles that we hoped would be coming available in due course. "Due course" because while we have been preparing for and planning for the expansion of our livelihoods programme, we have not yet secured funding for this

expansion. But with staff, some of whom are our longest standing staff, now needing new positions, we were desperate to avoid retrenchment and therefore we were earmarking staff for positions in faith that we'd be able to keep them employed.

While everyone was fully aware of the situation and all processes were followed for a possible retrenchment, everyone still got stuck in wherever needed. Some staff started helping out at our two preschools, some sorted out things we had in storage in the office. Over the course of a few weeks, the Refuse and Recycling Centre became fully sorted and ordered again, after it had become a bit disorganised after seconding the team to assist with finishing the Livelihoods Access Centre build as soon as possible. Although not thrilled when asked, our ladies from the hospital even shovelled building sand and did it with all their effort. It has been incredible to see the hospital team throw themselves into everything we asked them to do, whether they found the work enjoyable or not - they did it for the overall sake of the Jabulani team. And as the Jabulani team slogged away, amidst relative disorder, some panic, lots of uncertainty, a bit of anger, some







confusion and a lot of sadness that our time working with Zithulele Hospital might be coming to an end after 15 years of partnership\* (remember, this was our foundational reason for being - our vision statement says "We aim to bring hope and positive change to the community around Zithulele Hospital by supporting the hospital and partnering with the community in its development and growth"), there was a growing sense that everyone around us was watching with baited breath to see what was to become of this big building that had been under construction since the end of 2021.

During the last stages of the construction, we turned some attention to naming the building. We felt strongly that we didn't want to name it after a person, but rather something that would convey its purpose. Discussions with the Jabulani Core team reinforced the fact that our Livelihoods Programme is going to be about developing what people already have..."what is in their hands?" What potential do they already have and how can it be maximised, while also looking at how we can break the poverty mindset and handout mentality. Taking it a step further, once maximising what people have, how do we encourage people to share what they have in their hands with others, inspired by the loaves and fishes story from the bible when one person's food was multiplied to be shared with thousands.

Taking the task to the Jabulani team, whose dreams had been so instrumental in us constructing this building (see our newsletters from [August 2021](#) and [March 2022](#)), we asked for their suggestions for a name for the centre. This year's group of gap year students, completing our Masiphakameni (Let's Rise) programme, later presented a goose-bump inducing name with a very moving explanation. They explained "long before the hospital was here, before the NGOs were here, or before anything we see here now was here, people came and they planted seeds. And now we (pointing to themselves), are beneficiaries of those seeds that have been planted so long ago, and others that have been planted since, by the NGOs". As they concluded their explanation, they proposed that the centre be named "imbewu", meaning "seed" in isiXhosa. Amongst the Core team and the Board, it was unanimous that this should be the name, with Imbewu perfectly reflecting the purpose of the centre - a place where we would be planting seeds through

creating access to opportunities, after which people would need to pursue the further development of their livelihoods on their own, hopefully to the point where they could have an overflowing positive impact on those around them.



With staff needing new roles, we pushed for a crazy opening date of our Coffee Shop at least, arguably the most awaited section of the centre, for the 1st of September. With Isabel, our Coffee Shop manager imported all the way from California - actually a Zithulele-and-coffee-passionate volunteer returning for the second time to voluntarily oversee the Coffee Shop and train our staff for a year - at the helm, alongside Zirk - our artistic genius and Coffee Shop Guru who not only designed the entire Livelihoods Access Centre but built the Coffee Shop entirely by himself, including all the furniture and often without the ideal tools and all because his heart is more full of love and passion for community development than anyone we've come across before - we screeched to the "opening on time" finish line just on time! The Siyabulela Coffee Shop (We give thanks) opened on the 1st of September, and while we are keeping the menu simple to start with, we have served many sweet treats, coffees, and toasted sandwiches to grateful customers who are thrilled to have a place like this to come to, either to have some quiet time by themselves, to spend time with friends or even for a work meeting. We've been so pleased to hear people talking proudly about "their coffee shop in Zithulele" and incredibly encouraged to hear how they felt such a sense of hope while they were in the shop.



\*Our partnership with the hospital has since come to an official end for now but more on this in the next newsletter.





## AT A GLANCE

### WHAT WONDERFUL RUBBISH

While many of us may have experienced frustration at times when faced with a child asking what feels like a million questions, most of them starting with "why?", curiosity is extremely valuable to a child's growth and development and we should be encouraging this trait and fostering a sense of curiosity rather than suppressing it. While reading a book about the life and work of Maria Montessori, in celebration of her birthday, the teachers at our Zithulele Montessori Preschool had to answer many questions from their engaged and curious listeners! They learnt about taking care of the environment, so as a craft activity, the children made paper maché bowls out of recycled paper and newspapers. Although they have partaken in litter pick-ups before, the children didn't know where rubbish went once it had been collected, or that some of the items could be used again, so the



teachers arranged a visit to Jabulani's Refuse and Recycling Centre. With a parent volunteer providing extra support, our curious band of explorers went to the Centre and asked all sorts of questions, for example, why was glass and cans separated? As curious children should, they didn't waste the opportunity to ask questions on the walk to and from school as well, asking questions about all that their eyes could see, including what the road signs meant.